

Bank Street College of Education Educate

Graduate Student Independent Studies

5-15-2013

Building community in the classroom through storytelling : theoretical and field-based perspectives

Yelena Kushnirova

Bank Street College of Education

Follow this and additional works at: <http://educate.bankstreet.edu/independent-studies>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#), and the [Elementary Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kushnirova, Y. (2013). Building community in the classroom through storytelling : theoretical and field-based perspectives. *New York : Bank Street College of Education*. Retrieved from <http://educate.bankstreet.edu/independent-studies/139>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Educate. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Independent Studies by an authorized administrator of Educate. For more information, please contact kfreda@bankstreet.edu.

**Building Community in the Classroom Through Storytelling:
Theoretical and Field-Based Perspectives**

By Yelena Kushnirova

Mentor: Nina Jaffe

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Science in Education

Bank Street College of Education

2013

Abstract

Building Community in the Classroom Through Storytelling:**Theoretical and Field-Based Perspectives****Yelena Kushnirova**

This study includes a discussion of the meaning and definition of story and storytelling from literary and socio-cultural perspectives with field-based examples in formal and informal educational settings (grades 1-5). A selection of Russian folktales with a presentation of folktale structure and morphology (Propp) and their implications for classroom practice are included.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
I. Introduction and Rationale.....	4
A. Storytelling in My Life.....	5
B. Why Stories Matter.....	7
II. Background Research.....	14
A. Theoretical Frameworks and Definition.....	15
B. Storytelling's Social Context.....	18
C. Folktale and Myth.....	20
III. Field Examples and Analysis.....	25
A. The Wise Little Girl – 4 th & 5 th grade.....	27
B. The Bad Wife – 4 th & 5 th grade.....	31
C. Yelena the Wise – 3 rd grade.....	34
D. The Fisherman and the Fish – K-2 [camp setting].....	37
IV. Conclusion.....	40
V. Bibliography.....	43
VI. Appendices.....	51
A. Propp's Thirty-One Morphological Functions.....	52
B. Annotated Resources for Teachers.....	56

I. Introduction and Rationale

I. Introduction and Rationale

A. Storytelling in My Life

Stories time-stamp my life. My recollections wind, vaguely linear, beginning with bedtime tales my father told, cajoling me to sleep. I tell stories: to friends and strangers, to children and cousins and students, on hikes, at bedtimes, and on the classroom rug. Stories are told everywhere, everywhen—the start of a story signals a hush, a quieting of quotidian concerns and a start, hand in hand, on the path to entrancement in the tale. Everything outside of the story retreats and quiets, and the story's details—setting and character and events—come into focus in the mind's eye.

I have always loved stories, particularly the telling of them. I love and have loved the bridges stories create between imaginations and realities—between the storyteller and the listeners. I relish the connections that are created, tentative and strong as silk between experiences, wonders, and between what is meant and what is said, and what it is left unspoken and ethereal. In childhood, I loved the stories my father told and created stories of my own—scary and wonderful remixes of the fairy tales with which I was familiar. Stories were a way of playing with my world, of making sense of disparate ideas and lines of thought, and of exploring different possibilities in life and fiction.

As I grew, the stories I told and the stories that were told to me wove the seine that caught my childhood. The stories helped me figure out how to look at myself, look at the people around me, and make sense of fiction and of how I thought.

My father told me stories to lull me to sleep, to coax me to eat. I was always easier sated on the meat of a tale rather than the meat of a plate. He told me Russian fairy

tales, but my favorite tales were the ones he'd invented, about the sylvan childhood of my mother—of her tempting anthropomorphized bears into friendship. He teased my mother this way, inviting her into the telling of the tale.

I invented stories of my own, using the characters I'd heard of in tales told, read in books, and seen on television. I invented friends and new adventures after the close of a book or a chapter. I used the tropes I'd heard or read, such as toys coming to life, to invent a world and life for my dolls, and sometimes scared myself so much that I refused to sleep in the same room as the toys.

When I was around twelve, on a long car trip, I told a tale that incorporated elements of Snow White: a wicked witch, red-hot shoes, and allusions to sexual assault. I wove interesting elements I'd recently become acquainted with (red hot iron shoes, forcing their wearer to dance) with a familiar plot (a woman is hunted by a powerful figure, is protected and then is triumphant over her powerful enemy) and dealt with difficult concepts that I'd begun to struggle with, especially in the wider social world.

I took a storytelling workshop in my freshman year of college. I learned about story maps, audience engagement, setting moods, styles, and developing a repertoire. I learned how to tell a long tale, when to improvise and when to return to stock phrases, and how to divine and follow the structure of a tale—how the bones support the form, but the form is of my own creation.

In my first semester at Bank Street, I took a one-credit course called *Storytelling with Children* (Jaffe, 2010). My previous focus in telling tales had been in the tale told; with the change of emphasis from storytelling *to* to storytelling *with*, my focus changed toward involving students in telling the story, and to facilitate them into telling their own.

B. Why Stories Matter

Storytelling has many functions in the classroom, both curricular and non-academic. Storytelling builds literacy skills, through familiarizing students with narrative structure (conventional stories told with a beginning, middle, and end, have a climax and resolution, and so on), building receptive vocabulary, and familiarizing students with common literary tropes (e.g. the hero wins in the end, the villains get their just deserts). Storytelling supports the development of attention and stamina, as students sit and listen to short or lengthy tales, needing to keep track of the story in order to enjoy it. Storytelling is also perceived as pleasurable, as something to which to look forward, and by teachers, as something that unifies students in the act of attending and listening. Storytelling shares and builds cultural capital within the classroom, as the teller shares their own stories (values and knowledge) and the listeners enthusiastically accept. Storytelling is a way of revealing parts of yourself—what you value, enjoy, love, know, and wish to share with others. Through this lens, storytelling is one way to build community in the classroom. As children and teachers share their stories, they share of themselves, and therefore build bonds.

Storytelling is made up of two parts: the act or vehicle for information, and the message it conveys. Both are worth a closer look. Momentarily leaving aside the content of the telling, storytelling as a medium has several signifiers and facets. There are many lenses through which to look at the act of storytelling: its function in terms of cultural setting, its place in identity formation of groups and individuals, as a mode of literature or vehicle for text, and its linguistic function, for example. Similarly, the story or content of storytelling may be analyzed in a myriad of ways through literary theory: Russian

formalism, narrative structure, reader response theory, post-structuralism, structuralism, and semiotics. Most importantly, stories are a way of conveying meaning at the pragmatics or social level of language, beyond the semantics of the words used in stories. Stories personalize the abstract, nuanced relationships and conceptions that are part and parcel of the way we make sense of the world, and the way we construct knowledge and understand our experiences with complex phenomena such as love and death.

...the best we can have of those substantial truths that guide our lives is metaphorical—a story...that the truth reveals itself most fully not in dogma but in the paradox, irony, and contradictions that distinguish compelling narratives—beyond this there are only failures of imagination: reductionism in science; fundamentalism in religion; fascism in politics.

(Lopez, 1980, p. 71)

Stories are anathema to all-or-nothing thought, to black and white categorization.

I will analyze my own experiences telling stories with children through these lenses. I hope to represent how storytelling is a boon in classroom practice, not just in the development of literacy, but in building community within the classroom as children tell stories to explore their identity, to share that identity with others, and to find common ground with their peers. During the telling, they may learn that others' experiences are sometimes their own, and are still comprehensible and relatable even when they are not.

This paper is on the importance of telling stories and of stories, in the classroom, and with children. Stories and the telling of stories inform and interrogate personal identity—how children define who they are. And as children share stories with each other, they build relationships with all the members of the community. Stories weave

connections, and the offering of stories as gifts strengthens relationships. Stories reveal the personal in ideas and concepts far-removed.

a. Stories personalize the abstract. “Too often students feel alienated in schools. Knowledge is foreign. It’s about other people in other times” (Christensen, 2002, p. 174). Stories personalize knowledge, and abstraction. Stories turn the other into the familiar—they fold space like the tesseracts in Madeleine L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time* to bridge the gaps between the concrete and the far away in the context of when, where, and who. And so knowledge becomes personal, meaningful, proprietary and yet shared—shared by all those listening and telling. In experiencing a story, students are connected to the particulars of its setting and its characters’ sociocultural context. They enter into the story in their mind’s eye and find ideas or customs that originally seemed strange or confusing to be more familiar, comfortable, approachable and eventually comprehensible.

The stories told in the classroom, whether traditional folktales, anecdotes from daily life, family stories or original stories influenced by children’s literary experiences, may also be treated as text to be thoughtfully perused. Students notice literary motifs—the princess is always rescued, and always married, and they may remark upon and question that. Stories are not told in a vacuum, separate from other values, ideas, or considerations. Often, the stories we tell reveal our attitudes toward correct behavior, what is desirable, and what is appropriate to be, do, and want. Stories may be discussed, after and between tellings. They provide references for conversations about narrative, or societal expectations, or zeitgeist in the classroom.

Sharing also provides a “collective text” for us to examine the social roots of

problems more closely: Where do men/women develop the ideas that women are sexual objects?...How did these roles develop? Who gains from them? Who loses? How could we make it different? Our lives become a window to examine society.

(Christensen, 2002, p. 175)

Stories provide windows into experiences that are simultaneously collective and representative and transition into critically examining the nature of our experiences and our assumptions.

Stories are challenging and difficult—about truths and realities that are hard to understand, conceive, and face—about horror, betrayal, growing up, and death. Thus, they can be difficult to create. They are about mysteries—investigating life’s unknown and dealing with the unknown; creating and telling with through fear is hard, though rewarding. “...Some [students when writing their personal stories] were afraid of the stories because as [student] Rance said, ‘It takes heart to tell the truth about your life’.”

(Christensen, p.175)

Stories are more powerful than didacticism. Compared to lectures, stories convey concepts, ideas and/or values in a format that is both vastly more palatable, but also more accessible:

“My parents did not just lecture on principles...they used the power of stories to...lead me to discern the values they upheld.” The stories taught her that not only should she do certain things as a result of her own personal values, but also because she was part of a larger community. (Christensen, p. 177)

Stories are a gestalt—more than one story, they are a collective experience, a collective

canon that touches the listener and participants of not just one story, but of all stories—many stories.

According to educational theorists Anne Haas Dyson and Celia Genishi (1994) stories retold in a community become a network of meanings shared and connect the members who hear, tell, and retell: “Stories [are] these ubiquitous discourse forms...” (p. 2). Discourse is usually understood as a spoken or oral form of communication or debate. In this sense, story is discourse—it is a dynamic, interactive communication event that shares and mediates ideas between listener and teller. Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) an influential Russian literary theorist, held that “[a]ny understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive... Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker...” (1986, p. 68). Story, especially, responds to the paralinguistic cues of listeners and tellers. For example, tellers insert explanatory information into the telling based on the facial expressions of listeners, or modify their storytelling style or approach to the story if listeners show signs of boredom or disinterest. The listeners also grow more invested and attentive to a story based on facial or body cues from the teller. A successful story adheres to Paul Grice’s theory of the cooperative principle in communication—that speakers, wishing to make sure they are understood, will heed four maxims: truthfulness, clarity, relevance, and the provision that a story must have no more and no less information than the situation (or enjoyment) requires. In other words, just as a successful conversation relies on the cooperation between participants (the speaker and listener), and is predicated on the willingness and ability of the speaker to be speak clearly, pertinently, truthfully and sufficiently, a successful story (one which is intelligible and enjoyable to a

listener) requires the storyteller to speak in a clear manner. He or she is to relate only that which is likely within the world of the story, and to neither under- nor over-develop elements such as plot, characterization, or setting.

Just as in conversation, the act of telling and listening to a story is dynamic and active—the audience does not just mutely, passively consume the story told. Instead, the audience responds to the story, nudging it here and there along its path. According to contemporary literary theorist, Karl Kroeber (1992), “[h]owever often a story is retold, each narrating event is a social construct, involving some identifiable persons, some specific occasion, some special purpose” (p. 59). Children learn and apply similar principles as they develop their social awareness and literacy skills. In conversations with peers and adults, children learn to actively respond and verbally and nonverbally indicate their comprehension, interest, and involvement in the subject matter. And just as children respond to and influence the course of an orated story¹, they gain similar comprehension skills and ways to become engrossed in written stories.

b. Stories as gifts. The act of sharing stories is a key social practice in many different cultures, due to the act’s inherent reciprocity. The act of telling a story often elicits a reciprocal telling from a listener (e.g., ‘that reminds me of a time when...’). The French sociologist Marcel Mauss (1990) wrote that in archaic societies, giving a reciprocal gift was incumbent upon any person or tribe who received a gift, in order to maintain and build closer relationships. Linda Christensen (2002) agrees “...[s]tories are gifts...” (p. 178). However, storytelling is not just intergenerational gift-giving, between

¹ See Vansina (1985) for further discussion of the cues which elicit audience response, and the codes which signal established plot devices and cultural mores in the structure of African oral literatures.

teachers and students or elders and children, but also interpersonal and intercultural—between individuals to build friendships, and between groups to build understanding. Share of yourself and others share of themselves in return.

Dyson and Genishi (1994) further develop this idea. They explain that teachers learn about their students' cultures, experiences and interpersonal connections through the stories that children tell in the classroom. Furthermore, through sharing stories, "teacher and children create the potential for new connections that link them together inside a new tale" (p. 2).

A story is inclusive and presumes audience response—the teller, consciously or subconsciously, responds to cues from the audience about the plot, characterizations, his/her tone of voice, facial expressions, and hand gestures, and the audience responds to the same. Stories are not an esoteric, inaccessible mode of communication. Stories may be told by anyone. They are recursively defined—if someone wishes to tell a story, what they tell is most likely a story. It is something that begins and ends, that separates listeners' and tellers' everyday experience from the experience of participating in a story, and in hearing or telling a story.

II. Background Research

II. Background Research

A. Theoretical Frameworks and Definition

Stories may have many functions—the ones stated above are only a few of the ways stories may integrate with the function and intent of a classroom. To apply Plato's Allegory of the Cave, (Jowett 1991), education is a fire through which many cast a shadow, in various shapes and forms. Education's scope may be described in several ways: to introduce the world to the young, to teach them how to making sense of that world, and to help them to connect with the wider world and people around them—in short, to find and derive sense and meaning. These are also core principles in the developmental-interaction approach (Nager & Shapiro, 2000) and psychology (Bruner, 1986).

There are as many definitions of story as there are storytellers and theorists—and as many definitions of storytelling as there are tellers and theorists. Story may be understood as a way for individuals to internally organize and make sense of experiences, memories, and behavior. Dyson and Genishi (1994) agree that “[w]e all have a basic need for story, for organizing our experiences into tales of important happenings” (p. 2). This conception of story as an organizing principle dovetails with contemporary neurocognitive research about the human brain's construction of narratives to explain experiences and actions (Gazzaniga, 2012; Liston, 1994). This theory reinforces the importance of storytelling, (beyond structural or formalist components) socially mediated and understood through interaction and paralinguistic cues unique to each retelling.

Story is transformative. In the experience of hearing or telling a story, we

transform, and our perceptions and interpretations are changed; and so, all is changed (even when little materially is). Stories depict possibilities—of events, perspectives, actions, and much more besides—which we try on as we tell or listen. We immerse ourselves in the story, are persuaded by the view of the world we adopt while we tell or listen, and are therefore influenced by the story, whether negatively or positively.

For me, storytelling is akin to jazz improvisation—the notes are the same, the theme does not change, but the development and the play within the theme changes and evolves from performance to performance, from telling to telling. This malleability of a story's structure is another compelling reason to incorporate storytelling into the classroom. Storytelling provides an opportunity and ready medium for children to create, modify, and express increasingly complex schema and understanding with peers, families, and teachers.

a. Form and content. The term 'story' may include myths, legends, folk tales, fairy tales, personal anecdotes, narratives taken whole cloth from written texts, or other media. Any narrative told to an audience by a teller intending to tell a story can be considered a story.

Storytellers convey ideas and experiences such as emotions and cultural mores in their storytelling. They don't do this at the literal level of language (by saying e.g. "this is wrong," or "she was sad") but through the "musical and image-making features of language—by rhythm and rhyme, figures of speech, and revoiced dialogue" (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 4).

Storytelling is language in a ritual function and with ritualistic marks. The

beginnings, endings, and social setting may all be, and usually are, ritualized. They are repeated, with the weight of meaning behind the repetition, and an underscored separation between one activity and the next—separation into a new space/event—mark the ritual. Listeners and tellers are taken out of the profane, the common, the everyday, and into the sacred, the other, the holy, and the separated. Stories' beginnings and endings demarcate the same crossing over—changing over from the common use of language and communication into a different form².

The start of the storytelling—quieting down, focusing on the teller, the first words of the tale—serves to separate the audience from usual occupations. The story itself is liminal, taking the audience betwixt and between³ common time and ordinary patterns of thought, neither firmly anchored to their physical experience, nor physically within the story. The audience is suspended in the story; daily concerns and selves are superseded by the story. The end of the telling brings the audience's awareness back to its environs, changed.

Stories begin with a signal to the listeners: hark for a story is to be told. The signal may be as mundane as the words, 'I'm going to tell you a story', or as formulaic as, 'Once upon a time'. (Livo & Rietz, 1986). These signal phrases are expressed in a myriad of ways, depending on the cultural provenance of the story—where it is traditionally told. 'Beyond the thrice-ninth kingdom, beyond the thrice-ninth land' and 'There lived—there were' (Жили-были) are both ways Russian tales often begin. Whatever the language, these beginning phrases serve to denote, for both teller and listeners, a shift from conversation to a different mode of discourse—that of story.

² See Livo and Rietz (1986) for examples.

³ See Turner (1964) for more on rites of passage.

B. Storytelling's Social Context

a. Individual identity formation. The narrative form as found in stories, as described above, are a way to organize an internal comprehension and experience of reality—how people frame sensory and data input from life experiences. Stories provide representative exemplars for developing this interior mental framework. According to cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner (1986), “...stories, in Paul Ricoer’s phrase, are ‘models for the redescription of the world.’ But the story is not by itself the model. It is, so to speak, an instantiation of models we carry in our own minds...” (p. 7). And so, in turn, story structures mirror the narrative frameworks we have internalized.

Stories influence personal narratives; they are used as paradigms and archetypes⁴. People recognize and repeat tropes within personal story arcs. They search for the climax and the resolution to the crises, conflicts, and challenges within their lives—and expect them to be found. Too, such expectations and familiarity with story form allows children to more easily compare and contrast what is heard and told in stories and to weigh the information within. “When students compare what they hear in stories to important aspects of their own lives, storytelling offers opportunities for them to identify and clarify values—a fundamental step toward analyzing personal feelings and thoughts” (Christensen, 2002, p. 177).

Children and adults need stories to unify disparate occurrences into something congruous. The act of internal narration is concurrent with categorization, organization, and correlation. Through a narrative structure, children and adults find connections and tell each other their interpretations or findings in story form.

⁴ For more information, see the section on Lévi-Strauss section below.

Children share stories in order to share their realizations and knowledge, thus building peer, familial and other important social connections. “The storytelling self is a social self, who declares and shapes important relationships through the mediating power of words” (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 5). As I told stories, so too did the students I’d worked with in my student teaching, the children I’d worked with in summer camp, and my young cousins. They told tales that intertwined tropes and characters they’d heard of and read into their own, new stories. Children take authorship and ownership of the narratives influential to and important in their lives.

b. Group identity formation. Stories from folklore are fictionalized instances of cultural mores and values. These instances of storytelling are people’s reflections on circumstances and values, and are ways of interrogating and exploring cultural ideals and norms. Stories initiate listeners into a culture—into becoming members of society. Arthur Amiotte (1992), in his “The Call to Remember,” recounts how the traditions and history of his people were communicated to him by his grandparents through storytelling—through “tellings” (p. 34). Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) mourned the dearth of storytelling in his children’s lives, believing that “[c]hildren need stories,” (Baker & Draper, 1992, p. 10), and that “[i]f you look at these stories carefully, you will find they support and reinforce the basic tenets of the culture. The storytellers worked out what is right and what is wrong, what is courageous and what is cowardly, and they translate this into stories” (p. 12). For Chinua Achebe, stories are a vehicle of the past—of history and Igbo culture. His children are not part of “the storytelling tradition as a conscious form of socialization” (p. 9). In a sense, storytelling *is* the culture.

Stories show the warp and weft of who we are, of the cloth we've made together, as a group and as a family, how we've woven ourselves together, and bound ourselves together in shared experiences and recall. We call again on those lexicons, those anthologies of history, to say, "this is who we are, who you are, who you could and will be" and we look on our work together in joy and sorrow, saying we are together. The notable Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) believed that the stories each of us tells maps our place in the sociocultural context, connecting stories with culture and power⁵. In our stories, we echo the voices we hear in our sociocultural context. In other words, through telling stories, we attest to our membership in our cultures, through the way we create stories and the content of those stories. It is this interactional, social foundation that speaks so clearly to education.

C. Folktale and Myth

a. Classification and analysis. According to folklore scholar Stith Thompson (1885-1976), folktale as a term may be defined and used as an umbrella term for fairy tales, animal tales, wonder tales, etc. The salient, crucial characteristic of all the genres (whether written or oral) is the "traditional nature of the material" (1946, p. 4). In Thompson's view, the import of a tale is not just the tale itself, but the occasion of its oral or written recounting situated within a chain of tellings—passing the tale on.

Thompson's and folklorist Antti Aarne's work, *The Motif Index of Folk-Literature*, is an encyclopedic codification of world folktales. This sort of categorization is concerned with finding a commonality linking disparate tales, and the disparate cultures that told and tell them, into a taxonomy that reveals universal themes in human

⁵ See Bakhtin (1986) for more about the connections between stories, culture, and power.

knowledge and experience.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) was a French anthropologist who provided important insights into myth and storytelling through structural analysis⁶. Lévi-Strauss investigated the relationships between parts of a myth—its elements. His analysis reveals that myths are made up of numerous paradigms interacting as dyads or triads. The elements that Lévi-Strauss derives in his structural analysis of myths are not isolated but may be grouped according to a commonality. A pattern between elements emerges, revealing an otherwise obscured conclusion or solution to a dilemma crucial to the society that created the myth, or to the dilemma central to the myth. According to Lévi-Strauss (1955), myths have logic.

Myths are stories that initiate the individual into group belief, through the presentation, reiteration and treatment of paradigms or dilemmas. The myths both present and preserve the community or group within whose auspices they are told. People who tell and hear these myths internalize and appropriate their complex underlying structures and culturally-determined truths. Thus, they are able to use myths as vehicles for conveying and comprehending complex ideas and values, beyond their surface or apparent literal meaning. This mythic thinking is universal whether one is an urban city dweller or indigenous to the Amazon rainforest.

Ideas about truth and mythic paradigms are also crucial to Freudian and Jungian theory. These ideas, in particular, were popularized through the work of Joseph Campbell. His books focused on mythic archetypes through a psychological lens⁷. The work of child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim (1989) hypothesized that fairy tales provide symbolic

⁶ To read more of Lévi-Strauss' seminal theories, see his multivolume work, *Mythologiques*, especially the first (1969) and second (1973) volumes.

⁷ See Campbell (1949).

pathways through which children may navigate challenges, such as separation and attachment or resentment of parental authority. However, the focus of this study will center on formalism and anthropological theory.

b. Russian formalism and Propp. Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) was an influential theorist of the formalist school who analyzed Russian tales in depth. In his book, *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1928, 1968, 2010), he sampled one hundred of Alexander Afanas'ev's⁸ collected tales in order to inductively derive a general classifying principle for the various tales and types of tales. Propp criticized other theorists that worked deductively, assuming a classifying system *a priori* and then attempting to categorize tales. Propp derived what he called a morphology of the folktale, “a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole” (Chapter II). He analyzed the tales “according to the functions of its *dramatis personae*,” (Chapter II) or according to the purpose or effects of a character's actions on later events in the narrative. For example, all interactions between characters that lead to a hero acquiring a magical agent (animals or objects with magical properties), whether through conflict, guile, reward, force, theft, or chance, are all classified together under the same heading, as the same functional component or element, in Propp's terms: “*provision or receipt of a magical agent*” (Chapter III). The person from whom the hero acquires the magical agent is the type of character Propp calls a donor, whether his/her nature or actions are beneficent is irrelevant; the donor is defined through the consequences of his/her actions on the narrative. In other words, if a character causes the hero to acquire a magical agent, then

⁸ Alexander Afanas'ev was the most prolific collector and publisher of Russian folktales.

that character is the donor in the tale. Propp derived eight primary, mostly distinct *dramatis personae*, or character roles, that may be present in the Russian tales he studied: the hero, the helper, the false hero, the villain, the donor, the dispatcher, the princess (or sought-for person), and the princess' father, though Propp attested that the last two roles' spheres of influence or functions were indistinguishable. Though some Russian fairy tales have girls in the role of hero, many fairy tales do treat the princess as something to be won in marriage—often the final function in the fairy tale. These roles are not exhaustive and there may be other roles in a tale, such as betrayers, and those that act as connections. Some characters may also take on several roles in the same story.

Propp inducted thirty-one morphological elements, or functions of the Russian fairy tale, which include interdiction, violation, trickery, mediation, receipt of a magical agent, struggle, victory, return, pursuit, rescue, exposure, punishment, and wedding. These functions, according to Propp, always occur in sequential order in the tale, even if each function is not present in every tale. Propp avers that most tales begin with a description of the initial situation, in which the hero is usually introduced. Each function is defined in detail, with several examples from tales. These include some that seem contradictory to the overarching theme of each category, but which Propp includes in his explication and evidence for a function. While all stories end in death or marriage, to misquote Lord Byron⁹, it seems that according to Propp, most Russian folk tales end in marriage. This lends credence to Russian folklorist Alex E. Alexander's (and others') assertion that Russian folk tales model the ritual of the Russian folk wedding ceremony.

Propp's analysis is consequentialist, defining story events as components or

⁹ "All tragedies are finished by a death; all comedies are ended by a marriage." *Don Juan*, third canto, stanza IX.

elements based on the consequences to the narrative and also on their occurrence in the narrative's timeline (when the events took place). He finds character's intentions and motivations irrelevant to his analysis of tale structure. Furthermore, he finds the details of each tale—the particulars of characters and setting—to be extraneous to structural analysis, even though he does accede that these details are that which make the tales so enjoyable to tell and to hear.

However, for educators, structural analysis offers a key to literacy and text comprehension, in both aesthetic and metalinguistic understanding. In the following section I will present field-based examples from my own experience sharing Russian folk tales with children in a range of settings. Propp's functions and analysis, as discussed above, will be utilized as a critical apparatus in the reflection on these experiences.

III. Field Examples and Analysis

III. Field Examples and Analysis

I have told and continue to tell stories with children in three contexts: in a classroom setting, a camp setting, and a family setting. Each setting entails different expectations and is colored with different moods, has different discussion structures (if any), and different purposes to each experience. The purpose of storytelling in the classroom setting was meant to build community, engage children, and to provoke thoughtful discussion and literary comparisons to other texts and genres. The purpose in the camp setting was to entertain, distract, and create group coherence in a single activity—to focus on the story instead of discomfort or boredom. In the family setting, the purpose was to entertain cousins who wished to hear stories and had requested them, and so stories were told appropriate to their age and background. The family setting has a mix of similar objectives to the other two contexts, although much less formal. They include greater numbers of interruptions, “to be continueds”, and plenty of back-and-forth with the audience.

This mode of communication (storytelling) is particularly audience-dependent. While there is reader engagement in written texts, and effective texts are tailored for their intended audience, storytelling involves a series of communicative exchanges with the audience, wherein linguistic and paralinguistic communication influence the content, form, and style of the tale. For example, if a storyteller notices that his audience will join in with a refrain, he may extend the story or modify it so that the refrain repeats several times.

In this section, four field examples of storytelling with children will be described

and analyzed through the lens of Propp's methodology, with the following components: background, tale synopsis, post-tale discussion, and analysis.

A. "The Wise Little Girl"¹⁰

a. Background and setting. In my first semester of student teaching, I worked with a combined 4th and 5th grade class. The year's integrated social studies theme was immigration, an important component of which was learning about the societies and cultures of the individuals who immigrated. One of the students' first assignments in the unit was to research their family's immigration history, and their culture of origin. An important motif of the unit was the idea that one of the ways to learn about a culture is to learn the stories it tells.

In order to introduce and emphasize this motif, I told the students a story after a lesson in which they had been asked to think, write about, and illustrate the one and only thing they would bring if they had to immigrate. A secondary goal was for the students to understand that immigrants brought intangibles—their folklore and culture, and traditions such as storytelling and riddling—with them as well material objects.

b. Synopsis of the tale. I told the class an Afanas'ev tale: "The Wise Little Girl." The tale is one of my favorites; the protagonist is female, and, even more importantly, she is not punished for her cleverness.

The tale begins with the motif of two brothers, one rich and one poor, in conflict over a good.

The brothers take their dispute to the courts, with the rich brother bribing the judges, and the poor brother appealing each verdict, until the tsar

¹⁰ To read the story in full, see Afanas'ev, (1945), pages 252-255.

himself hears the case. In order to decide whose argument has the most merit, he sets the brothers four riddles to answer by the next day. The rich brother goes home and receives help from his mother-in-law; the answers she gives are pedestrian and solipsistic. The poor brother goes home and receives aid from his little seven-year-old daughter; the answers she gives are clever and profound. The tsar asks the poor brother if and who had helped him. He sends the poor brother home with impossible tasks for the girl, to be achieved on pain of death. As answer, she sends back witty and impossible conditions for the achievement of those tasks. After three exchanges, the tsar sets the girl one final riddle, replete with seemingly-contradictory conditions. She meets the conditions and ridicules his equivocations about the original dispute. The tsar takes her into the castle to live.

c. Post-tale discussion and effects. After the story, the class discussed the tale: what they liked, what was interesting to them, what further thinking it inspired. Some of the students commented, for example, that they liked how the girl was the smartest person in the story, and that it was a nice change from the usual story about a girl who's only described as nice and pretty. They also noticed that the story hadn't ended in marriage. I explained that there are many versions of the tale, and that in several versions, the little girl ends up marrying the tsar, sometimes after having lived in his castle for a while (and therefore, theoretically grown up) and sometimes right away. The students found that rather perturbing.

I explained that riddling and telling stories are an important part of Russian culture—that riddles and stories are often told at important events, such as weddings and holidays. I asked the class if their families ever tell riddles or stories at dinner or family gatherings. Several said that they did, and then the discussion segued into the students recounting some of the riddles they knew, challenging each other to figure out the solutions. Over the next week, the students asked their families about similar traditions and reported back during the share portion of morning meeting. Several students came up with their own riddles to tell their classmates during recess and lunch.

d. Proppian and literary analysis; analysis of student responses. Though the students found the wise little girl to be the main character of the tale, particularly as she is the most active character—the one who solves the riddles and the one who travels to the tsar’s castle in the climax—from a Proppian standpoint, her father may be construed as the hero of the tale. According to Propp, the characters are defined (and named) by the effects of their actions on the plot and on the hero. In one part of Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), it seems that Propp argues that the only actions the hero need retain to be termed the hero are to wed at the end of the tale (if a wedding occurs), and to react to the demands of the donor (the person by or through whom the hero receives assistance, magical or otherwise). In another section of his book, Propp underscores that the hero is the character whose actions or progression the story follows.

The hero of the tale may be seen as the father or poor brother. He is the one who the thread of the story follows, until the climax, at least, when the little girl sets off for the castle alone. This is indeed a reversal of the story thread for he is originally the one

who leaves home, encounters a test, and attempts to win the foal from the tsar. The girl may be seen as the helper, for according to Propp, the helper may act in place of the hero when responding to tests.

Truly, the three main characters in the tale: the wise little girl, the poor brother, and the tsar may arguably be named as several *dramatis personae*. This is not unusual in Propp's view—characters may often share actions or have different actions accrued to the aegis of another character. However, in this story, the particular attenuation of the poor brother as hero (a common motif in many tales) and tsar as donor, result in the strengthening of a female protagonist; the wise little girl takes on more functions usually under the purview of several other character types. Interestingly, this shift takes place throughout the tale, and can be seen if one follows the path of the tale's narrative focus. It begins with the poor brother and rich brother traveling, having been dispatched off-screen in order to gain some lack (money) for the family at home. The narrative begins with a focus on the poor brother, and yet at the end of the tale the focus is entirely on the outcome for the little girl. Though the Russian tale often ends in the hero's wedding, the poor brother does not marry, and it is implied that the benefits of a noble marriage are gained by the wise little girl by moving into the castle.

This story is interesting because the wise little girl develops from helper figure into the hero character type. Often and disappointingly, girls and women are defined by their relationships to men—as wives, daughters, and mothers. Though the wise little girl's position in life is reflected in her relationships—daughter of a poor man, later ward or wife of a rich man—she is the agent of that change in status. Even within a traditional tale, there is the possibility and model of female agency.

B. “The Bad Wife¹¹”

a. Background and setting. On one of my last days as a student teacher in the combined 4th and 5th grade class, I decided to share another Russian story and activity with the class, as a way of saying farewell.

During the immigration study, we had also focused on the importance of food to a culture. I decided to continue in this vein, and make *pelmeni* with the students. Pelmeni are like the more familiar pierogies, in that they are dumplings with a filling, but they are smaller, and have a thinner and more elastic dough. Making pelmeni is quite the time-intensive undertaking, and so many Russian families would make them together, telling stories to fill the time.

After explaining the activity, the cooperating teacher and I divided the class into four groups, each of which would work with me in making pelmeni consecutively while I told a story and students and I chatted about the story and the pelmeni. While one group was with me, the other students read and worked on their immigrant journals with my cooperating teacher. The first group made the dough and the filling; the other three groups rolled out the dough, filled it and pinched it together. I boiled each batch, and then the whole class ate the pelmeni together.

With each group I explained and modeled how to accomplish the tasks. Students had the option of trying their hand at each of the tasks if they desired (kneading, measuring and mixing, rolling out small circles of dough, filling the dough, and sealing and pinching the dough into the pelmeni shape), or of continuing with the task they

¹¹ To read the tale in full, see Afanas'ev,(1945), pages 56-57.

preferred.

I decided to tell “The Bad Wife,” as it is short, somewhat humorous, and has much with which to spur discussion. Each time I told the tale slightly differently, incorporating students’ reactions to the previous tellings, and responding to the students’ facial and bodily cues as they listened. Each discussion that followed was different; some groups focused more on the tale than the task, or vice versa.

b. Synopsis of the tale. The story begins with an account of a contrary wife. She did the opposite of everything her husband asked of her. If he asked her not to reap grain, she would go out into the field and do so all day.

One day, the husband spotted a berry bush and a bottomless chasm beside it. The bad wife, contrary to her husband’s direction, went straight to the bush and fell into the pit. After several days, the husband returned to the pit and sent down a rope. A small devil had climbed up and begged the peasant not to throw him back, because the bad wife was pinching and torturing all of the devils in the chasm. The devil and the husband made a deal—they would go into town and the devil would possess someone and then the peasant would come to drive him out. The husband was touted as a great doctor, and given much gold and accolades. The devil told him he had made him enough money, and was now going to possess a boyar’s daughter, but the peasant was not to “cure” her, or else he would torment him. The boyar called for the famous doctor, and would not let him refuse to treat his daughter on pain of death. The peasant told the devil that the

bad wife was coming, and that he should hide in the pit to escape her. The devil ran right back to the pit and remains there, with the bad wife, to this day. The peasant married the boyar's daughter.

c. Post-tale discussion and effects. Some students thought the bad wife was quite foolish, others remarked on the cleverness of the peasant, and some discussed the ethical implications of the story. A few students were interested in the ethics of profiting from solving a problem one had caused, while others were interested in the problem of abandoning a wife in a terrible place, and one student remarked on the issue of marrying one woman while still technically married to another.

Each group found different points of interest in the tale, to discuss with each other and with me, while working on the pelmeni. Some compared this tale to the other I had told them earlier in the year, noting that cleverness was emphasized in both tales. Other groups focused more on discussing their own family's cooking traditions and family specialties in comparison with our activity.

d. Proppian and literary analysis; analysis of student response. "The Bad Wife" is a tale that fits better with a Proppian-style analysis than does "The Wise Little Girl" as the former includes magical elements, namely the imp or devil, and the bottomless pit or abyss.

The disappearance of the eponymous bad wife leads to the husband's departure from his home. Usually, this departure is in aid of retrieving the missing family member and alleviating that lack. In this case, the lack is a welcome one, allowing for the husband

in the tale to eventually win a new bride.

Interestingly, too, the hero of the tale is usually the one forbidden to do something, often disobeying with eventual beneficial consequences for the hero. In this story, however, it is the bad wife who ignores her husband's commands, suffers for them, and whose disobedience results in a story about her husband and not herself. This subversion of the expected spheres of action also caught the interest of the students to whom the tale was told. Some found it strange that she was so contrary, foolishly so, and thereby easily manipulated. They questioned the intelligence of the bad wife in being obstinate, but also the morality of the husband's clear manipulation. They were conflicted over the ending of the tale—some did not think that the husband had earned the right to marry the boyar's daughter.

One might say that this is meant to be an instructive and cautionary tale to wives on pleasing their husbands. However, the parts of the tale that the students found most entertaining—the points at which they had smiled or grinned—were the reactions of the imp to the bad wife at the beginning and the end of the story. They found it comical that a supernatural creature was frightened of someone being mean. The tale's entertainment was in its subversion of student expectation, not the possible didacticism about appropriate gender roles.

C. "Yelena the Wise"¹²

a. Background and setting. In my second semester of student teaching, I worked with a 3rd grade CTT class in Brooklyn. I chose to tell them a tale as a farewell activity, both to share something I enjoyed and to help launch their subsequent folk tale unit.

¹² To read the tale in full, see Curtin (1999), pages 218-227.

There were approximately 30 students in the class, two cooperating teachers (one special education teacher and one general education teacher), and an aide. The students had a range of abilities and experiences—e.g., only some heard and were read stories daily. Some had diagnoses of ADHD, speech or language impairment, and some were reading far below grade level.

b. Synopsis of the tale. “Yelena the Wise” is one of my favorite tales, not least of which because we are homonymous. It is the first story I learned how to tell.

The title is misleading—the protagonist is Ivan, while Yelena is treated as an amalgamation of desired object and adversary.

Ivan is a soldier, stranded on an isle. He finds a cavern and tricks the many-headed dragon within into thinking he is the dragon’s son. The dragon showers him with riches, and then leaves him alone in his castle for several months, warning him he must not open but one room, on pain of death. Ivan opens the room, inadvertently frees Yelena the Wise and her maidservant, and falls in love with the former. The dragon, after punishing Ivan, gives him a flying carpet with which to pursue Yelena. He is ephemerally successful in capturing her to be his bride, but she cleverly escapes. Ivan returns to the dragon, seeking help. The dragon warns Ivan that if he pursues his troth, he must pass Yelena’s test, else she will kill him. He fails the first two tries; Yelena’s maidservant helps him in return for an earlier kindness. Yelena, thwarted, yields and marries Ivan.

c. Post-tale discussion and effects. The tale is a long one. The entire class, including those with language and attention difficulties, sat and listened the whole story through. As we discussed the tale afterwards, the students were spontaneously inspired to tell their own stories. Over the next few days, the students got up in front of their peers and told stories. They combined elements from each other's tales, familiar stories and pop culture to tell embellished and sequential narratives.

d. Proppian and literary analysis; analysis of student responses. This tale, out of the four I have described here, is the one that best follows and fits Propp's morphology and structural analysis. For example, Ivan is the hero, Yelena the princess, the dragon the donor, and the animals and maidservants are the helpers. Yelena's character, however, may also be seen as a villainous figure as she threatens Ivan's life. The princess that the hero weds, in most Russian fairy tales, wishes to marry the hero—it is quite unusual that a prospective reluctant bride stays reluctant throughout the tale, and also stays alive without being supplanted by another female character who simply wishes to marry the hero. This subversion of the usual pattern is interesting for students, for though the tale closes traditionally with one of the Russian equivalents of 'and they lived happily ever after': "...[they] began to live, to live on and win wealth" (Curtin, 1999, p. 227) , there is no indication, apart from the formulaic ending, that Yelena was happy to marry or was so in her marriage. Though many, if not most, Russian tales end in marriage (according to Propp), they usually mean to end without any loose ends, with the expectation that all conflict is resolved. Though the wedding is the last element of this story, it does not resolve the problem of the hero seeking a wife and his wife not wishing to be sought.

Such a tension is one that the students noticed. They did not think it fair that Ivan cheated, though they also thought it unfair that Yelena would have cut off his head otherwise.

Though the story, on the surface, included similar elements to tales with which students were more familiar, they questioned the fairness of the marriage as resolution to a fairy tale. Some of their subsequent stories included clever heroines who decided not to marry the prince, or brave adventuring princes who did not wish to marry the princess.

D. “The Fisherman and the Golden Fish”

a. Background and setting. The summer after my year of student teaching, I worked as a day camp counselor with rising second graders. I told several stories over the course of the summer. One I told twice. The first time I told the tale of “The Fisherman and the Golden Fish,” I told it collaboratively with another counselor while the group was on a long hike in the park. The purpose behind the telling was to distract the children from their fatigue. The second time I told the tale, I was seated with a large group of children, ranging in age from four to seven years old (rising preK-2nd grade), including the same children from the nature walk. The telling was markedly different, as I incorporated several repetitions and repeated phrases and different vocabulary.

b. Synopsis of the tale. The tale I told was a mental translation of Pushkin¹³’s verse.

A fisherman and his wife live in a shack by the sea. They are so poor that they have a broken washtub in front of their hut. One day, after several tries at casting his net, the fisherman caught a golden fish. To his surprise,

¹³ To read the tale in the original Russian, see Pushkin, (1989).

it spoke and begged the fisherman to let him go. The fisherman agreed and later told his wife. “You fool! You idiot! Why didn’t you ask for...?” his wife bade him to request ever more increasingly luxurious appointments and powerful positions from the fish, until she asked for too much, and the couple was left with nothing once again.

c. Post-tale discussion and effects. The children joined in with the wife’s harangue each time it was repeated, and with the fisherman’s halting requests. Afterward, we talked about the story—whether the children thought the couple had gotten what they deserved, what they should have done instead, if the fisherman should have listened to his wife, and so on.

Some of the children thought the wife was greedy, while others thought that the fisherman should have stood up to his wife. Some thought that the golden fish ought to have not returned after the first request, while others thought only the wife should have been punished, and others that the golden fish should have left them a bit better off than before.

This story, as did “The Bad Wife,” included religious elements. Versions of this tale have the wife asking to be made God (instead of ruler of the universe). Many Russian tales abuse traditional religious terms and ideas (god, priests) in what would have been understood as farcical or mocking heretical portrayals. In telling these tales to children in secular settings, there is sadly opportunity for misinterpretation of the tales as genuinely religious or problematically heretical instead of a medium for a population to cope with a rigid hierarchical society.

d. Proppian and literary analysis; analysis of student responses. The hero of the tale is the fisherman. He is dispatched at the beginning of the story to remedy a lack (food). However, he is a hero with an unusual lack of agency, as he does not leave home for an extended period of time, but only leaves due to the impetus provided by his wife. The fisherman is an attenuated sort of hero figure, one that never quite leaves on his quest. He is complacent and does not seek a change to his circumstances, and so the story does not conclude with a change to his circumstances, as most stories do, but with the exact same conditions. He does not even end up with conditions that are similar and yet improved (due to the acquisition of money or wife). This complacency is a flaw that runs throughout the narrative, and one which the children noticed. They were disappointed by the end of the story—they thought something ought to have changed for the fisherman, if not for both the fisherman and his wife. Because the fisherman (the putative hero) did not completely do as a hero does, according to Propp—leave and seek—he is an incomplete protagonist and his incompleteness led to the subversion of the expected ending, which the students recognized.

In considering stories' structural and morphological elements, I was able to analyze children's understanding of and response to the stories they had heard, particularly in terms of implications for the recognition and facilitation of the connections students created and strengthened to each other as audience and fellow listeners and in making meaning within the classroom community context.

IV. Conclusion

IV. Conclusion

Storytelling is not a common, salient feature in the contemporary classroom, even when the art and practice of telling stories is an excellent way to entwine erudition and community. Stories reveal, exhibit and even probe the mores, values, and concerns of the teller, the listener, and the larger society that give rise to those stories. As a result, stories and storytelling inform and affect individual and group identity. Stories are an accessible medium, allowing listeners and tellers to grasp otherwise abstract concepts and experiences. Within the course of telling a story, listeners and tellers co-create the story in their interaction with each other and the story itself, in their collaborative interpretation of the story's meaning and import. In the classroom, sharing stories builds bridges—in understanding abstract ideations, and between the participants.

Over the course of this independent study, I have realized the value of Propp's work in relation to the analysis of both (Russian) folk stories and students' responses to storytelling. Propp's methodology and its results provide an avenue through which to investigate children's responses to folktales within the context of their experiences with stories (such as the ones popularized by Disney, the ones they see in TV shows, and the ones their parents tell). The salient, pervasive features of stories which Propp unearthed are the same features of tales that students often find in their own discussions and critical thinking about stories, particularly when those features are unexpected or subverted. These features are different from the more superficial commonalities that very young children notice ("there's a wicked witch or talking horse in this story, too!") and do not further investigate. Instead, these commonalities are ones that spur further discussion,

thought, and creative manipulation of source material—children’s own stories once they go beyond a simple listing of characters.

Schematic frameworks from formalism and structural analysis allow teachers to incorporate folktales and oral literature in classroom discourse, in turn enriching the learning community.

V. Bibliography

V. Bibliography

- Afanas'ev, A. (1945). *Russian fairy tales*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, Inc.
- Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. (V. W. McGee, Trans.). University of Texas Press: Austin, TX.
- Bettelheim, B. (1989). *The uses of enchantment: The meaning and importance of fairy tales* (Vintage Books ed.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Blatt, G. (1993). Introduction: Children and folklore. In Blatt, G. (Ed.), *Once upon a folktale: Capturing the folklore process with children* (pp. 1-6). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bruchac, J. (1997). *In Bowman's store: A journey to myself*. New York: Dutton.
- Bruner, J.(1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1994). Life as narrative. In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 28-37). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Burkert, W. (1998). *Creation of the Sacred* (pp. 1-55.). Cambridge: Harvard U. Press.
- Byron, G. G. B. (2007). *Don Juan*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/21700>
- Campbell, J. (1949). The monomyth. In *Hero with a thousand faces* (pp. 3-46). Princeton, NJ: Bollingen Foundation.
- Cazden, C. (1994). What is sharing time for? In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The*

- need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 72-79).
Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Christensen, L. (2002). Whose standard? Teaching standard english. In B.M. Power & R.S. Hubbard (Eds.), *Language development: A reader for teachers* (2nd ed.) (pp. 173-177). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Cianciolo, P. (1993). Folktale variants: Links to the never-ending chain. In Blatt, G. *Once upon a folktale: Capturing the folklore process with children* (pp. 80-96). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Curtin, J. (1999). *Myths and folk tales of the russians, western slavs, and Magyars*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Dyson, A.H., & C. Genishi. (1994). Introduction: The need for story. In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 1-7). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Dyson, A.H. (1994). "I'm gonna express myself": The politics of story in the children's worlds. In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 155-171). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Egan, K. (1986). *Teaching as storytelling: an alternative approach to teaching and the curriculum in the elementary school*. London, Ontario, CN: University of Western Ontario.
- Estés, C. (1992). *Women who run with the wolves: Myths and stories of the wild woman archetype*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Fletcher, R. (2002). A love of words. In B.M. Power & R.S. Hubbard (Eds.), *Language*

- development: A reader for teachers* (2nd ed.) (pp. 104-109). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Gazzaniga, M.S. (2014). Your storytelling brain. Retrieved <http://bigthink.com/users/michaelgazzaniga>
- Gilbert, P. (1994). "And they lived happily ever after": Cultural storylines and the construction of gender. In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 124-142). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Greene, M. (1994). Multiculturalism, community, and the arts. In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 11-27). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Grinberg, J. (2005). *Teaching like that: The beginnings of teacher education at bank street*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Haase, D. (1993). Motifs: Making fairytales our own: yours, mine, or ours? Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and the ownership of fairy tales. In Blatt, G. (Ed.), *Once upon a folktale: Capturing the folklore process with children* (pp. 63-79). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1969). Relevant Models of Language. In B.M. Power & R.S. Hubbard (Eds.), *Language development: A reader for teachers* (2nd ed.) (pp. 49-53). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Hamilton, M., & Weiss, M. (1996). *Stories in my pocket: Tales kids can tell*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.
- Jaffe, N. (2000). Bringing storytelling and folk narrative into classroom life. In N. Nager

- & E. Shapiro (Eds.), *Revisiting a progressive pedagogy: The developmental-interaction approach* (pp. 161-178). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Jakobson, R. (1945). Commentary. In *Russian fairy tales*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, Inc.
- Kroeber, K. (1992). *Retelling/rereading: The fate of storytelling in modern times*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1955). The structural study of myth. In *Journal of American Folklore*, LXVII (pp. 428-444) reprinted in pp. 289-302 in Lisa and Vogh, *Reader in comparative religion*. NY: Harper and Row, 1972.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1969). *The raw and the cooked*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1973). *From honey to ashes*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Livo, N., & Rietz, S. (1986). *Storytelling: Process and practice*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.
- Liston, D.D. (1994). *Story-telling and narrative: A neurophilosophical perspective* (pp. 1-13). Greensboro, NC: University of North Carolina (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 372 092).
- Lopez, B. (1980). *Landscape and narrative: Crossing open ground* (pp. 45-51). New York: Vintage.
- MacDonald, B. (1987). *Mrs. piggle-wiggle's magic*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.
- Macdonald, M.R. (1993). Finding folklore. In Blatt, G. (Ed.), *Once upon a folktale: Capturing the folklore process with children* (pp. 50-59). New York: Teachers College Press.

- Mauss, M. (1990). *The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. (W.D. Halls, Trans.). London, UK: Routledge. (Original work published 1950.)
- Miller, P., & Mehler, R. (1994). The power of personal storytelling in families and kindergartens. In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 38-54). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Nager, N., & Shapiro, E. (2000). Introduction. In N. Nager & E. Shapiro (Eds.), *Revisiting a progressive pedagogy: The developmental-interaction approach* (pp. 1-7). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Newkirk, T., & McLure, P. (2002). Telling stories. In B.M. Power & R.S. Hubbard (Eds.), *Language development: a reader for teachers* (2nd ed.) (pp. 97-103). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Nicolopoulou, A., Scales, B., & Weintraub, J. (1994). Gender differences and symbolic imagination in the stories of four-year-olds. In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 102-123). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Ohler, J. (2011). Art, storytelling, technology, and education. Retrieved from <http://www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/storymaking.cfm>
- Plato. (1991). *The republic: The complete and unabridged jowett translation*. (Jowett, B., Trans.). Toronto, CA: Vintage Books. (Original work dated 365 BC.)
- Propp, V. (1928). *Morfologia skazki*. Retrieved from <http://feb-web.ru/feb/skazki/critics/pms/pms-001-.htm>
- Propp, V. (1968). Excerpts from *Morphology of the Folktale*. (The American Folklore

- Society and Indiana University, Trans.). Retrieved from
<http://homes.di.unimi.it/~alberti/Mm10/doc/propp.pdf>
- Propp, V. (2010). *Morphology of the folktale*. (Wagner, L.A., Ed.) (Kindle version).
 Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com>
- Pushkin, A. (1989). *Skazka o ribake i ribke*. Leningrad, Russia: Xydozhnik RCFCR.
- Livo, N. J. & S.S. Rietz (1986). *Storytelling: process and practice*. Englewood: Libraries Unlimited.
- Roe, B., Alfred, S., & Smith, S. (1998). *Teaching through stories: Yours, mine, and theirs*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.
- Rooney, R.C. (1993). Telling stories: A key to reading and writing. In Blatt, G. (Ed.), *Once upon a folktale: Capturing the folklore process with children* (pp. 9-25). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Rosenak, M. (1995). *Roads to the palace: Jewish texts and teaching*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Saussure, F. d. (1988). *Course in general linguistics* (2nd ed.). La Salle, IL: Open Court.
- Simon, P. (Ed.) (2001). *The norton anthology of theory and criticism*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc.
- Thompson, S. (1946). *The folktale*. New York: Dryden Press.
- Thompson, S. (1966). *Motif-index of folk-literature: A classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Turner, V.W. (1964). Betwixt and between: The liminal period in *rites de passage*. In

The proceedings of the american ethnological society: symposium on new approaches to the study of religion. (pp. 4-20).

Vandergrift, K. (1986). *Child and story: The literary connection*. Chicago, IL: Neal Schuman Publishers.

Vansina, J.(1985) *Oral tradition as history*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Zipes, J. (1979). *Breaking the magic spell: Radical theories of folk and fairy tales*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

VI. Appendices

VI. Appendices

A. Propp's Thirty-One Morphological Functions

The following is based on my reading of Propp in the original Russian, as well as two English language translations, as listed in the bibliography:

I. The first function follows the initial situation: in which a family member leaves or absents himself (whether due to death, work, war, or several other reasons).

II. The second function is the interdiction, by which the hero is commanded not to take some specific action.

III. The third is the hero's violation of the interdiction or negative command; the villain is introduced to the narrative.

IV. The fourth function is reconnaissance, or the villain's attempt to gather information.

V. The fifth is delivery, when the villain receives information about his victim.

VI. The sixth is trickery, wherein the villain tries to deceive and take possession of his (intended) victim or the victim's property.

VII. Next is complicity, when the victim deceived and unwitting, aids the villain.

VIII. The first seven functions Propp sees as the preparatory section of the tale, setting up for the eighth function which begins the complication, or rising action of the tale. The eighth function is villainy, when the villain effects injury or harm to a family member (a character introduced in the initial situation). When villainy is not present, there is usually a demonstrable lack (function VIIIa) or insufficiency that prompts the hero to act similarly in the case of villainy—i.e. to quest.

IX. The ninth is termed mediation, the connective incident, when the hero learns

about the villainy, causing him to leave home or his current setting, and start on his way toward addressing the villain's actions from the previous functions. (As Propp describes this function: the lack or misfortune is made known; a request or command is given to the hero; the hero is given leave to go, or is dispatched.)

X. The tenth is the beginning counteraction, when the hero, if a seeker (searching for something to address a lack, including the lack of a wife) decides on or agrees to counteract the villainy.

XI. Departure: the hero leaves home, and often encounters the donor, who later provides the hero with a magical agent addressing the lack or some problem the hero must solve.

XII. The twelfth is the first function of the donor, whereby the donor tests the hero in some way. The test paves the way for the hero to acquire a magical agent. The test need not be intentional on the part of the donor, nor an act which has a planned beneficent outcome.

XIII. The hero's reaction to the donor's actions or test.

XIV. The provision or receipt of a magical agent, the function wherein the hero acquires something--an animal or object with magical properties. The *dramatis personae* of the hero is identified contextually--the hero is the character in the tale that acquires the magical agent and uses it, just as the hero is the character who is victimized by a villain, recognizes his own lack, or volunteers to ameliorate the lack or misfortune of another (e.g. the father of the princess who is kidnapped by the villain).

XV. The guidance, spatial transference between two kingdoms, of the hero--i.e. the hero somehow moves or is moved to a new location which contains the object he

seeks (e.g. a princess to wed).

XVI. The struggle, or where the hero and villain fight directly in some way, though the contest need not be physical.

XVII. The branding, marking, wherein the hero receives some identifying talisman or mark.

XVIII. The victory, when the villain is defeated, usually by the hero's direct action.

XIX. The nineteen function is paired with the eighteenth (victory), in the climax of the action, when the initial situation of villainy, misfortune, or lack is remedied or eliminated.

XX. The return of the hero to an earlier setting, usually the location in the initial situation.

XXI. The pursuit, or chase, wherein a villain or a villain's proxies chase the hero in order to do him harm.

XXII. The hero is rescued, through his actions, the aid of a magical agent, or another character's intervention. The dissolution of one villainous act sometimes segues into a series of functions dealing with a second and then perhaps even a third villainous act--these series, or moves, as Propp terms them, are often assembled into one tale, though Propp thinks them to have originated as separate tales.

XXIII. The unrecognized arrival of the hero home or to a new location, signaling the first of the functions that end with the hero proving himself worthy (of rule, marriage, recognition as a hero, etc.)

XXIV. The unfounded claims of a false hero take credit for the hero's acts.

XXV. The hero is given a difficult task.

XXVI. The solution of the difficult task by the hero.

XXVII. The recognition of the hero, either by relatives or through the branding or marking of function seventeen.

XXVIII. The exposure of the villain as the villain or the false hero as false takes place.

XXIX. The transfiguration of the hero's appearance or home takes place.

XXX. The villain's punishment occurs, if there had not been a battle (function sixteen) or pursuit (function twenty-one) earlier in the tale.

XXXI. The wedding of the hero to the princess, and his concurrent ascent to the throne ends the tale. Sometimes, the tale ends only in marriage or only in new kingship.

B. Annotated Resources for Teachers

The following is a list of folktale collections useful for teachers who wish to begin and build their story repertoires.

Afanas'ev, A. (1945). *Russian fairy tales*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, Inc.

Alexander Afans'ev collected hundreds of stories. This collection, which has been reprinted several times, presents only a fraction of what was collected. Even so, the book includes a range of stories—animal tales, cumulative stories, stories about fools and much more besides. There are also several stories that feature the idiosyncratic Baba Yaga.

Cole, J., & Schwarz, J. K. (1982). *Best-loved folktales of the world*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

This book is an easy to use resource, as it is organized by geographical region, but also searchable by plot and character types. The collection's breadth makes it easy to find similar stories from different cultures to tell to students, allowing for a multicultural inclusive approach, as well as for comparisons between folktales.

Yolen, J. (1988). *Favorite folktales from around the world*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Jane Yolen has gathered together a selection of folktales from across the globe. In contrast to Cole, however, these tales are arranged by theme. There are stories

about fools, telling stories, ghosts, death, shape-shifters, and so on. These are written in a different style than the tales in Cole's collection; however, any of the tales in any of these collections could be adapted to the register of the classroom.